



Guidance to schools in relation to the changes in legislation for Post-16 Collective Worship

Aims of the guidance

These short guidelines have been designed to help schools to deal with the new legislation in a way that acknowledges the growing independence of the post-16 learners, enables them to appreciate what collective worship is meant to be, and encourages them to make decisions that are informed and robust, and not merely emotive and superficial.

What the law really says

The important things to note in regard to this change are:

- The statutory requirement for schools to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils **remains unchanged**;
- The provision for pupils being withdrawn from collective worship, at the request of parents, has always been in place since 1944;
- The new aspect is that post -16 pupils may request withdrawal from collective worship **for themselves**;
- The statutory requirements for all pupils, including those in Post-16 settings(*), to receive Religious Education **remains unchanged**.

Respecting the autonomy of learners

It is also important to recognise that having the right to withdraw **does not mean** that pupils **need** to withdraw from collective worship – it merely means that they may do so if they feel they have reasons for so doing. Therefore, rather than just coldly announce that students now have the right to withdraw, there should be some careful discussion.

Appreciating the benefits of collective worship

It would be useful for schools to discuss with students the contribution collective worship makes to their own spiritual and personal development, and that in acts of collective worship, pupils are given the opportunity to:

- Celebrate what matters in life, and people's contributions and successes;

(*) The statutory requirement is only for Post-16 settings managed under schools regulations

- Contribute to an activity that underline the importance of the ethos of a school and its community cohesion;
- Be part of an atmosphere in which students are free to explore and express a spiritual dimension to life in a positive and reflective manner;
- Meditate, reflect and experience prayer and worship;
- Look beyond the trivial or mundane, lift themselves and aspire, and to have a sense of vision and of hope;
- Recognise that life does have hard times and difficulties;
- Raise their awareness of issues in the wider community and globally';
- Explore and share experiences of awe, wonder and the mysteries of life'.

Promoting spiritual development

Schools have a duty to promote the spiritual development of its pupils. It would be worthwhile enabling students to understand that spiritual development or spirituality is not the same as being religious, but is about the process of developing their own thinking and understanding of life and the wider issues of meaning, purpose and fulfilment.

Students should also be helped to appreciate that acts of collective worship:

- Provide a special time separate from ordinary school activities;
- Are student centred and enable them to develop a sense of their position within the universal picture;
- Develop the ability to reflect on their own feelings, values and attitudes;
- Develop an awareness of the inner life and the spiritual dimension to each person;
- Explore and encourage response to ultimate questions about the meaning of life, change and death.

Benefits to the whole school of sixth form involvement

Given all the above, and given the age of students in post -16 settings, they have much to gain from thoughtful and worthwhile acts of collective worship; they also have much to give through presentations and in contributing to acts of collective worship. It would therefore be a great loss if these opportunities were all given away lightly and without thought.

Summary

Schools should:

- Be clear on the legal requirements
- Focus on enabling the autonomy of learners through reasoned discussions that will enable them to:
 - Consider the benefits of collective worship
 - Understand the context in terms of spiritual development
 - Appreciate fully the issues and consequences